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SENSE OF SENSELESSNESS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF KHANOLKAR, CAMUS, SIMPSON AND ALBEE

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Literature mirrors life. It represents the various facets of humanity. The human condition is essentially absurd in which there is no neck to neck relation between action of him/her and purport behind it. Human beings seem to be the isolated existents who are cast into an alien universe and the human world possesses meaninglessness which makes human life fruitless, unpurposive and insignificant; it shifts human life to nothingness or nihilism which is absurd. It seems that the destinies of all human beings are of equal futility, the refusal to live and the joyful acceptance of life lead, by the same path, to inevitable failure. It is the same futility and pointlessness of human effort, the same impossibility of human communication encompasses the literature. A play being closest genre to life imparts the very nature of society which is meaningless, insecure and absurd.

The Theatre of the Absurd prominently reflects such scenario of a contemporary era. Absurd originally means 'out of harmony', in a musical context. The definition focuses on the incongruous, unreasonable and illogical aspects in the concerned situation. Ionesco defined the concept 'absurd' as: 'Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose… Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost: all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.' It renders a sense of unpurposiveness, meaninglessness, metaphysical anguish, and so on issues. Precisely, it reinforces light on sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thoughts.

The Theatre of the Absurd is generally centred in Paris. It does not mean that the Theatre of the Absurd is essentially French. It is broadly based on ancient strands of the Western tradition and has its exponents in Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, Eastern Europe and the United States as well as in India. It exploits the fact that the Theatre of the Absurd spread all over the world. It was a period of the experiments, can be called the modernism. The Avant-gardes undertake in Ezra Pound's words to 'make it new'. Novelty is not only in the choice of subject but in their treatment also. They assert themselves as 'autonomous' and have the feeling that they are 'alienated' from the established order. Their chief aim is to shock the sensibilities of the conventional readers and make them aware of 'reality'.

C. T. Khanolkar's *Bajirao the Cipher* is highly complex play in its plot, structure, characterization and symbolism that throw light on the meaning of it, and bring out the meaninglessness of life. Bajirao's caressing of his life's offspring i.e. his play, his violin-case, his play-acting with the staff, on the one hand and his soliloquies and verbal encounter with Apparao, his telephonic dialogues with his own spirit, his vehement attitude of confrontation towards the world, his ironical outbursts on the theme of laughter and his dialectical plea for justice on behalf of all the beggars in the world on the other and--are all triumphant marks of Khanolkar's dramatic genius and achievement.

Albert Camus's *Caligula* revolves around the central protagonist named Caligula, Roman emperor. There is a play within a play and it is through a series of dramatic speeches, demonstrations and macabre vignette Caligula endeavours to get his message across. However, he is wrong and he fails. He realizes on the death of Drusilla, his sister and lover that 'men die and they are unhappy'. Therefore, obsessed by the quest for the Absolute and poisoned by contempt and horror, he tries to exercise through murder and systematic perversion of all values, a freedom which he discovers in the end is no good. He rejects friendship, love, simple human solidarity, and good and evil. He depopulates the world around him, and true to his logic, makes arrangement to arm those who eventually kill him. This is an absurd situation well pervaded all around the play.

The play *A Resounding Tinkle* by Norman Simpson takes place in claustrophic interior. It has only one act that shows the running down of a mechanism and it comes to a stop. Yet the play groups in characters in symmetrical pairs. The characters live a deserted and barren life. The world outside is dead. Some great catastrophe of which the four characters in the play are, or believe themselves to be, the sole survivors has killed all living beings. Everything happens in their life is a sheer meaningless.

Edward Albee's *The American Dream*, satire on American family life, concerns a married couple and their elderly mother on a particular day; they are visited by two guests who turn their worlds upside down. Albee explores not only the falsity of the American dream but also the status quo of the American family. Here plot, characters, situations and language are really symbolic and the absurd is prominently seen in action and thinking, and words deployed in the play.

Truly to say that these plays have no story or plot to speak of, mechanical (puppetry) characterization, themes without a proper beginning and an end, reflection of dreams and nightmares, incoherent babblings, and so on features. They have employed a distorted language, a blending of foreign and native symbolism, and dramatic techniques and devices to present the thematic concern effectively. These plays express sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. The plays seem to be the perfect specimens of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Hypotheses:

1. The non-conventional elements to the established frame of theatre are found in Khanolkar, Camus, Simpson and Albee's plays.
2. Their plays exploit sense of senselessness of the human condition.
3. The absurdity of human existence after the irrational and illogical thinking and behavior is a basic thematic concern of these playwrights' plays.
4. These playwrights' plays reinforce light on the fact that the absurdity is basically imbibed in the lives of people.
5. The plays shock the sensibilities of the world and make it aware of reality.
6. These playwrights seek voice in their own form of disjointedness, word play and irony through which they have portrayed an outer life juxtaposed with an inner life.

Objectives of the Study:

1. The present research aims at analyzing and studying the select plays of C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee as the model featurizing sense of senselessness of the human condition.
2. This work concentrates on a philosophical view 'life is meaningless'. The study attempts to diagnose the absurdities imbibed in the lives of people due to their illogical and irrational thinking and behaviour.
3. The study attempts to manifest reality of human condition in the world of uncertainties and incertitude.
4. The present study endeavours to explore symbols, techniques and devices, and language which are dexterously employed to heighten the effect of the plays.

5. The study also judges the place of C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee as the playwrights in the world theatre.

Research Methodology:

The research work is going to be approached through explorative, analytical and descriptive methods. The study is an analysis of C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee's select plays from various angles and perspectives pertaining to the absurd. It includes socio-religio-cultural aspects and their impact and philosophical view of meaninglessness in life in the light of the absurd.

Significance of the Study:

The purpose of this thesis is to underline the need to work for revelation/ exploration of sense of senselessness of the human condition and illogicality and irrationality in thoughts and actions of people after a blind imitation of socio-religio-cultural norms. It assists to comprehend how to confront, with dignity, a universe deprived of a general accepted integrating principle. It also makes an effort to make man/woman aware of the ultimate realities of his/her condition, to instil in him/her again the lost sense of cosmic wonder and primeval anguish, to shock him/her out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical and complacent, and deprived of the dignity that comes out of awareness.

Existing Studies:

The study of the literature, through the perspective of the absurd, is an essential and determinative task. In literature, there are some studies dealing with the absurd in Khanolkar's play *Bajirao the Cipher*. One of these studies is an article by L. S. Deshpande entitled as *The Absurd and the Avant-gardes in the Marathi Theatre*. It presents a tradition of the absurd play writing referring to the Indian Avant-gardes like Badal Sircar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Sadanand Rege and C. T. Khanolkar. The sense of meaninglessness and the generalized questions relating to existence of the self are at the very heart of the aspirations of their plays.

There is a research paper by Simon Leo on Camus's *Caligula* entitled as *Human Nature and the Absurd in The Stranger, Caligula and Cross Purpose.* It presents a human nature that is behavior and thinking that bring the absurdity in the lives of people.

There is an article by Edward Williams titled as *Beckett's Endgame and the Theatre of the Absurd*. It manifests light on human condition that is Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell's condition which is essentially absurd. There is no exact relation between action and purport behind it. It brings nothingness and senselessness in their life.

There is a research paper written by Datt Ewan Glenton entitled as *Simpson, Pinter and 'The Theatre of the Absurd': Background, Introduction and Content*. It focuses on the absurd moves of the characters and suitable situations and language to heighten the absurdity.

There is a study by Brion Woy on Albee, the Theatre of the Absurd and his plays entitled as *Albee and the Absurd: 'The American Dream and The Zoo Story'*. It reinforces light on the bizarre aura woven around the symbolic characters and sense of senselessness in their life.

There is another study by Charles Thomas Normans entitled as *The Theatre of Edward Albee*. It comments on Albee's plays like *The American Dream* and *The Zoo Story* that imparts the idea of the existential humdrum and hustle and bustle that make one's existence meaningless, unpurposive and isolated and so the absurd.

In general there are some other studies which are devoted to evaluate the absurd in theory and practice, but the present research is different from other studies because it attempts to explore the aspect of sense of senselessness of the human condition and make the human beings aware of the ultimate realities of their condition or existence in a universe that is deprived of disillusion and light. The novelty of this research work lies in its endeavour to interpret the texts concentrating on the aspect of sense of senselessness of the human condition in the light of the absurd.

Tentative Chapter Scheme:

The present research work will include a detailed analysis of the representative plays by C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee.

Chapter I– Introduction

This chapter will discuss the Theatre of the Absurd and its various aspects—concept, nature, definitions, background and development, theory and philosophy, practitioners (dramatists), non-conventional elements, thematic concern, significance and so on mainly focusing on C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee's plays.

Chapter II– Conventional and Non-conventional Impostures

This chapter will focus on the elements that make C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee's plays as the absurd specimens. The plays have no story or plot to speak of, mechanical (puppetry) characterization, themes without a proper beginning and an end, reflections of dreams and nightmares, incoherent babblings, and so on features.

Chapter III– Sense of Truth and Reality of the Human Condition

The chapter will concentrate on a philosophical point of view 'Life is a meaningless phenomenon' whether one endeavours to render it sense or not. Human beings live in a society which is ideologically structured that functions to favour the certain echelon and to discard the other ones. Similarly, the institutions such as religion, family and education tame the lives of people and they think and behave irrationally and illogically that consequence meaninglessness. Since meaning cannot be drawn out of meaninglessness, life becomes purposeless, absurd and useless. C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee's plays exactly exploit the whole phantasmagoria of meaninglessness of life.

Chapter IV – Germination of Imaginary World and Absence of Sense

The chapter will contemplate on an attitude of human beings to escape from the grim realities of life, creating an imaginary world which can impart sense for while but no permanent sense occurs from such insignificant acts. The ultimate truth one meets in his/her endeavour is absence of sense in such nonsense search.

Chapter V – Discourse of Symbolism, Dramatic Techniques and Devices, and Language

In this chapter, the language employed by C. T. Khanolkar, Albert Camus, Norman Simpson and Edward Albee in their plays will be analyzed. It seems that they seek voice in their own forms of disjointed, word play and irony through which they have created the worlds which are blend of the real and the unreal of acute observation of an actual life juxtaposed with an unsynchronized inner life. Their use of symbolism and dramatic techniques and devices will be studied.

Chapter VI– Conclusion

The general findings of the study at the superficial level are — the plays externalize and project happenings in the deeper recesses of mind, rottenness and decay of relationship, fright

seizure at communication with a fellow being in innermost self, machination of life, escapism to dream world and ultimate exposure to the worldly realities paying the path to despair, agony, pain, frustration, isolation, unpurposiveness and meaninglessness in life. The plays also do not follow the traditional pattern in plot, character, diction and dialogue. There are no notable plots, characters are actionless, language is distorted; and dialogues are inadequate to express the human situation. These features are rightly suitable to present loss of meaning and purpose in life and sense of senselessness of the human condition in the world deprived of certainties and certitudes.

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